Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.

Powell, R. and R.W. Henderson. 1998. *Alsophis anomalus.*

Alsophis anomalus (Peters)
Hispaniolan Racer

Zamenis anomalus Peters 1863:282. Type locality, unknown. Holotype, Museum für Naturkunde, Humboldt Universität, Berlin (ZMB) 2269; sex, collector, and date of collection unknown (not examined by authors).
Dromicus anomalus: Fischer 1888:37.
Alsophis anomalus: Barbour 1914:336. First use of present combination.
Leimadophis anomalus: Amaral 1929 (1930):164.

• **Content.** No subspecies are recognized.

• **Definition.** This large (maximum SVL to 1770 mm) colubrid has 197–215 ventrals, 109–130 subcaudals, 21 dorsal scale rows at midbody, 7–9 (mode 8) supralabials, 10–12 infralabials, 1/1 preoculars, 2/2 postoculars, 1/1 large suboculars, 1+2/1+2 temporals, and 1/1 elongate loreals. Dorsal scales are smooth and the cloacal scute (= anal plate) is divided.

The dorsum is brown, often with a bronze cast, and usually is patternless in adults, although specimens from Île de la Tortue may exhibit a faint pattern of anterior chevrons replaced posteriorly by crossbars. In adults, the free edges of the dorsal scales are often darker than the rest of the scale. The venter may be yellow or beige, without markings or with scattered, irregular dark blotches. The mental, chin shields, gulars, and infralabials are gray, and this gray wash may extend posteriorly on the free edges of anterior ventrals. The juvenile dorsal pattern consists of ragged crossbands 1–3 scales wide (only 1 scale wide on tail); the venter (body and tail) is immaculate ivory with a yellowish wash on some portions.

• **Diagnosis.** *Alsophis anomalus* can be distinguished from other Hispaniolan colubrids by its 21 dorsal scale rows at midbody. The only sympatric congener, *A. melanichnus*, has 17 dorsal scale rows at midbody. All other Hispaniolan colubrids either have extremely slender bodies and 13 or fewer posterior dorsal scale rows (*Uromacer*) or have 19 dorsal scale rows at midbody (*Antillophis*, *Darlingtonia*, *Hypsirhynchus*, *Ialtris*).

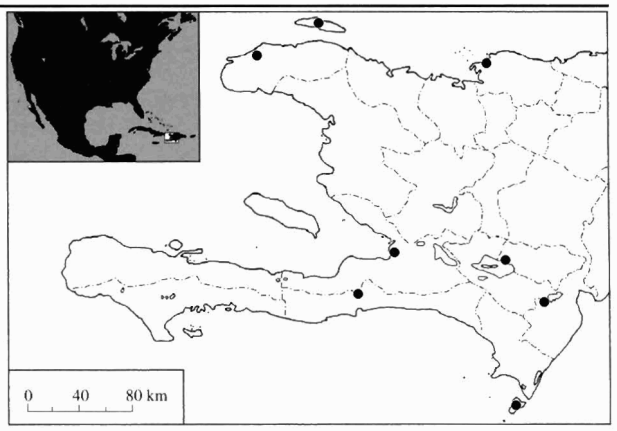
• **Descriptions.** Detailed descriptions are in Cochran (1941) and Schwartz and Henderson (1991).

• **Illustrations.** Line drawings of the head are in Cochran (1941).

• **Distribution.** A Hispaniolan endemic, this species has a wide but disjunct distribution in dry areas throughout the western half of the island. Specimens also have been taken on Île de la Tortue and Isla Beata. The range has been illustrated in Schwartz and Henderson (1991).

• **Fossil Record.** None.

• **Pertinent Literature.** Maglio (1970) discussed origin, phylogeny, and zoogeography. Schwartz (1980) characterized *A. anomalus* as an islandwide form. Ducorday (1981) discussed the ecology of *A. anomalus* on Isla Beata. Henderson and Sajdak (1986) noted distribution in relation to that of the mongoose. SEA/DVS (1990) provided an index to habitats in the Dominican Republic. Henderson and Sajdak (1996) provided informa-



Map. Range of *Alsophis anomalus* (modified from Schwartz and Henderson 1991). The type locality is too imprecise to plot, dots mark known records.

Figure 1. *Alsophis anomalus* from Palmiste, Île de la Tortue, Haiti. Photograph courtesy of C. Rhea Warren.

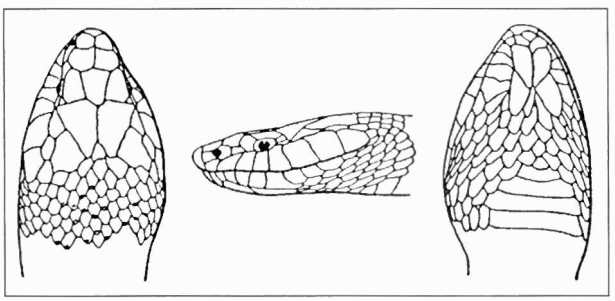


Figure 2. Head of an adult female *Alsophis anomalus* (USNM 59917) from Jean Rabel, Haiti (from Cochran 1941). The left subocular on this snake was fused with the fifth supralabial.

tion on diet. Rodríguez-Robles and Greene (1996) included this species in their study of ecological relationships of Greater Antillean snakes.

The species is included in notes, checklists, guides, and keys by Fischer (1888), Müller (1892), Boulenger (1894), Meerwarth (1901), Amaral (1929 [1930]), Barbour (1930, 1935, 1937), Cochran (1924, 1934), Schwartz and Thomas (1975), Henderson and Schwartz (1984), Henderson et al. (1984), Schwartz and Henderson (1985, 1988), Franz and Cordier (1986), Henderson and Crother (1989), and Powell et al. (1996).

Frank and Ramus (1995) proposed the common name "Hispaniola [*sic*] racer" for this species.

• **Etymology.** The name *anomalus* is derived from the Greek *anomalos* (uneven or irregular), possibly in reference to the faint dorsal pattern elements in these snakes.

• **Comment.** The rarity of this species is inexplicable; a fresh roadkill found in the Valle de Neiba in June 1997 (Bobby Witcher Memorial Collection, Avila College, Kansas City, MO 64145 [BWMC] 06124) was the first main island specimen taken in many years. Apparently suitable habitats are widespread and populations of other Hispaniolan colubrids often are very dense compared with those of most Neotropical snakes.

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